



Autism Insurance Legislation Testimony Justin Harlan



Hi! My name is Justin Harlan, and I am ten years old. When I was 2½, I was diagnosed with autism. I had a lot of sensory issues- I hated touching or eating foods that were mushy. I hated wearing socks and mittens and hats. My parents say I was sad and used to cry a lot of the time. I didn't smile a lot or look at people's faces. I did anything I could to avoid eye contact with people. Once I learned how to talk, I had echolalia, which means I used to just repeat back what other people said because I didn't know what to say.

After I was diagnosed with autism, my parents had me in 20-30 hours of therapies per week. I remember liking the speech and the ABA therapies, but hating the sensory therapy which was not fun at all! After a lot of treatment, I got better and my diagnosis of autism was removed before I started kindergarten! Now, instead of not talking enough, my parents sometimes say that I talk too much! I go to school, have friends, and do just about everything else that other kids my age do. All the therapies I had really helped me overcome my autism.

Unfortunately, these treatments were not covered by insurance. To pay for them, my parents spent all their savings, and then had to borrow money, which they are still paying back. A lot of families can't afford all these treatments. So, many kids with autism will never have a chance to get better like I did. If my therapies were helping me recover from a car accident or a disease, my parents' insurance would have paid for them. It's *just not fair* that insurance companies will help people recover from accidents, but not from autism.

I am proof that treatments for autism can work. Every person with autism deserves a chance to receive the kind of help that I got. Please do the right thing; please give people with autism a chance!

Thank you!

